

Kittery Town Council Workshop
Tuesday, May 10
Notes

Meeting Summary:

The Council and manager had a workshop on Tuesday, May 10 to help the Council work effectively and smoothly with the town manager and with each other as a Council. After the group identified why each person wanted to be a Councilor or Manager and what the role and the skills were for each job, the group listed what the Councilors needed from the Manager and visa versa. In addition, they identified what was most challenging in the Council/Manager relationship. With all that information the group agreed to the following steps that will support a good Council/Manager relation

- Praise in public, criticize in private
- Have clear expectations
- Have a mutually useful evaluation system
- Have a regular, annual session to set goals and mission, establish process and do a self evaluation of the Council

The Council then worked on what a well functioning council looks like and how it functions. Based on those ideas, the Council identified the following steps and working principles or group norms for the Kittery Council going forward. Below are those steps and principles combined with the steps identified in the first part of the meeting.

Steps:

- Have a list of principles
- Have the chair do more to help the Council stay on track and reduce procedural discussions
- Have clear expectations
- Have an effective, appropriate evaluation process for the Manager
- Have a regular, annual session to set goals and mission, establish process and do a self evaluation of the Council

Principles or Group norms:

- Praise in public, criticize in private
- Stick to the subject at hand
- Stay in the role as a Council
- We agree to treat our manager with respect
- Agree not to belittle or target staff publicly

The following notes provide the detail on all the flip chart sheets.

Meeting notes:

Agenda:

- 4:30 Meeting introduction: review the purpose, outcomes and agenda; introductions and ground rules for the workshop
- 4:45 Why are you a Councilor? What is your role or job? What skills are required to do your job?
Why are you a town manager? What is your job? What skills are required to do your job?
- 5:15 What are the differences between the Councilor's job and the Manager's job and what does that look like in practice?
Given what you said to me about the Council/Manager relationship in Kittery in the recent past, how can you strengthen what has worked well and solve what is not working as well. What tools do you already have, what do you need to make them work better for you.
What do you need from one another to do your different jobs well?
- 6:15 Supper break
- 6:40 How would you describe a Council that is doing its work well and serving the citizens well? What are they doing? How are they doing it? What does it look like?
Given what you have told me about what works well and what doesn't in your Council's activities in and outside of meetings, what can you do to move from where you are to that vision of a great Council?
What do you already have in place to help you? How can you make that work better?
- 8:20 Wrap up: review agreements, next steps, meeting evaluation
- 8:30 Adjourn

Group Norms

- Begin and end on time
- Be open to learning
- Value different points of view
- Listen for understanding
- Share the floor and encourage others to speak
- Cell phones off
- Use "I" or "we" messages

<u>Why are you a Councilor?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am a fan of good governance • Interest in planning issues • Giving back to the community (2) • Don't know any better • To provide a choice • Interested in public service • An addict • To communicate a positive change • Attraction to crises • Specific concern around environmental issues 	<u>Why are you a Manager?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to manage an organization • To serve the public • Assist organization to run good operations • Give back to the community • Communicate positive change
<u>What is your job as councilor?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote reasonable improvement, policy and guidance • Reflecting the views of the community • Ensure fairness • Work for best interest of the town as a whole • Promote the positive and fix the negative • Be fiscally responsible • Stop the bleeding heart liberals • Bring the Neanderthals into the 20th century • Promote good communication • Fresh perspective 	<u>What is your job as manager?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run the day to day operations • Accomplish goals • Communicate with the public • Support the employees
<u>What skills are required to do your job?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick skin • Sense of humor • Ability to listen • Willingness to do the homework • Have to really care about the community and process • Do the homework • Fresh perspective • Look at the issues • Question things • Ability to compromise • Listen to and be open to others • Knowing that the position comes with responsibilities 	<u>What skills are required to do your job?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick skin • Not speak out • Communication skills • Understand technology • Common sense • Ability to listen • Ability to compromise, listen to and be open to others

Councilors need from manager:

- Good information that is timely, accurate and reliable
- Clear communication
- That the manager is
 - organized,
 - able to meet deadlines
 - apolitical
 - independent
- respect from the manager for the Council's process
- no surprises
- timely response to requests

Manager needs from the Council:

- goals
- expectations
- priorities
- regular communication
- regular evaluation
- no surprises
- feel supported by the Council

What things are challenging in the Council/Manager relationship?

- Managing constituent complaints/questions effectively
 - Councilor needs to take the question / complaint to the manager and let the manager work with the staff to get a response rather than going directly to the staff
 - Manager needs to provide a timely response back to the Councilor
- Steps that will support a good Council/Manager relation
 - Praise in public, criticize in private
 - Have clear expectations
 - Have a mutually useful evaluation system
 - Have a regular, annual session to set goals and mission, establish process and do a self evaluation of the Council

What is your vision of a Council that is functioning very well?

- People are respectful to each other, to the citizens and to town employees
- There is transparency: votes, deliberations are done openly
- Space for each councilor to speak; no one monopolizes
- Explain what the process is to the public
- Focus on the issue at hand, be germane
- Only speak when you can improve on the silence, when you have something to add
- Councilors respect the outcomes
- No "gotchas", give people notice in advance
- No bickering over procedures; have a discussion
- People help each other to articulate ideas in a collegial manner

What can we do to get to that idea vision?

- Have a list of principles
- Annual session to set goals and do a self evaluation
- Have the chair do more to help the Council stay on track and reduce procedural discussions
- Stick to the subject at hand
- Stay in the role as a Council
- We agree to treat our manager with respect
- Agree not to belittle or target staff publicly
- Have an effective, appropriate evaluation process for the Manager

Basket of things still to do:

- Develop a procedures manual like Saco's but shorter (Russell)
- Look for better evaluation tools for the Manager (Chuck)